

Message Text

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ACTION SS-25

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FM AMEMBASSY PHNOM PENH

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S E C R E T PHNOM PENH 7365

EXDIS

E. O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINS, CB

SUBJECT: IN TAM AND THE HIGH POLITICAL COUNCIL

1. WHEN CONGRESSMAN JACK KEMP AND I CALLED ON PRIME MINISTER IN TAM AT NOON JULY 20, WE FOUND HIM IN A RELAXED AND OPTIMISTIC MOOD DESPITE VARIOUS REPORTS RECEIVED DURING THE PAST 24 HOURS THAT HE IS ABOUT TO RESIGN. THE CONGRESSMAN ASKED IN TAM DIRECTLY ABOUT RELATIONSHIPS WITHIN THE HIGH POLITICAL COUNCIL. THE PRIME MINISTER REPLIED THAT HE BELIEVED RELATIONSHIPS ARE IMPROVING AND THAT AN ATMOSPHERE OF GREATER MUTUAL UNDERSTANDING PREVAILS. HE CITED THE DELEGATION OF INCREASED AUTHORITY OVER MILITARY AFFAIRS BY MARSHAL LON NOL TO SIRIK MATAK AND HIS OWN PLANS TO PROCEED WITH SEVERAL CHANGES IN HIS CABINET, IN PARTICULAR HIS ASSUMPTION OF DIRECT AUTHORITY OVER THE MINISTRY OF INTERIOR.

2. WHEN WE INQUIRED WHETHER THESE CHANGES WERE CAUSING SERIOUS PROBLEMS, HE REPLIED THAT THERE ARE ONE OR TWO DISAGREEMENTS, BUT HE DID NOT APPEAR TO BE CONCERNED ABOUT THE OUTCOME.

3. IN TAM ALSO REPORTED THAT THE PROGRAM OF RECRUITMENT

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IS MEETING WITH SOME SUCCESS. HE SAID HE HAD

PERSONALLY RECEIVED SOME 300 RECRUITS FOR FANK DURING THE PAST SEVERAL DAYS, AND HE SAID THAT HE HAD HAD AN OPTIMISTIC REPORT ON RECRUITMENT FROM FANK.

4. IN TAM EXPRESSED CONFIDENCE THAT DESPITE THE LIKELY WITHDRAWAL OF US AIR COMBAT SUPPORT ON AUGUST 15 THE GKR WOULD CONTINUE TO DEFEND ITSELF. HE CITED THE CONTINUING FLOW OF REFUGEES FROM THE COUNTRYSIDE AS EVIDENCE THAT THE TACTICS OF THE ENEMY ARE NOT WINNING THE SUPPORT OF THE PEOPLE. HE EXPRESSED READINESS TO TAKE PERSONAL CHARGE OF EFFORTS TO RALLY THE POPULATION TO THE GOVERNMENT.

5. AT AN EARLIER BRIEFER MEETING WITH MARSHAL LON NOL THE LATTER ALSO EXPRESSED CONFIDENCE IN THE CAPACITY OF THE GKR TO CONTINUE ITS DEFENSES DESPITE THE WITHDRAWAL OF OUR COMBAT AIR SUPPORT. OUR CONVERSATION WITH THE MARSHAL OTHERWISE DEVELOPED NO NEW POINTS OF INTEREST.

6. COMMENT. IN TAM IS MERCURIAL, AND HIS HIGH SPIRITS TODAY MAY GIVE WAY TO MOODY DESPAIR TOMORROW. NONETHELESS, HIS STATEMENTS TO CONGRESSMAN KEMP AND ME WERE THE MOST FORTHRIGHTLY OPTIMISTIC HE HAS MADE SINCE ASSUMING THE JOB OF PRIME MINISTER AND CONTAINED NO INDICATION OF AN INTENT TO STEP DOWN. ON THE CONTRARY, IN TAM SEEMS NEWLY IMBUED WITH A NEED FOR POLITICAL SOLIDARITY OVER THE WEEKS TO COME.

7. OUR CONVERSATIONS AT LUNCH WITH SENATE PRESIDENT LT. GEN. SAUKAM KHOY AND ASSEMBLY PRESIDENT TAN KIM HUON ALSO GAVE NO INDICATION OF SERIOUS POLITICAL CRISIS, ALTHOUGH IT IS EVIDENT ANY EFFORT BY IN TAM TO CARRY OUT MAJOR REORGANIZATION OF THE GOVERNMENT AFFECTING SOCIO-REPUBLICAN INTERESTS WILL CAUSE MAJOR FRICTIONS. SWANK

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